



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

December 1, 2005

Superintendents, School Physicians,
School Nurse-Teachers, Special Education
Directors, Guidance Counselors and Student
Support Service Providers

Clarification Advisory Concerning the Enrollment of Students in DCYF Care

Dear Colleagues:

Many of you have asked questions about the Commissioner's Advisory regarding the immediate enrollment of students in DCYF's care while immunization records are sought. The following information is provided to clarify some issues brought to our attention by district health personnel regarding students in DCYF's care and for the general student population.

- All school health policies **must conform to Rhode Island laws**;
- Health records should always be transmitted separately from academic records in a *sealed* envelope addressed to the school nurse teacher in the receiving school;
- **Immunization information may be shared** between schools and between schools and health care providers **without permission**, as it is different from health record information;
- **A child may not be excluded nor may enrollment be delayed** for lack of completion of the PPd (tuberculosis test). Instead, this test should be given if no evidence of its having been previously given is available in those districts where this test is required;
- **Immunization information may be confirmed by telephone or fax**; written records must follow within ten (10) school days;

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- If a school nurse is unable to determine the student's previous school attended, s/he should contact the child's DCYF social worker to request that the DCYF record be searched for this information;

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- When immunization information is not obtainable from a previous school or from any other source, **it is not an option to turn the child away.** Rhode Island General Law 42-72.4-1 requires that "*each city and town [is] required to immediately enroll the child in its school system*" upon presentation of the child's intra-state education identification card. First, the child must be enrolled. Then, the only two options under the law are to **(1) track down the immunization records, or (2) if no records can be obtained within ten (10) days, as a last resort, the core battery of mandatory immunizations should be given. The child remains in school while these steps are being taken.**

If you have any questions or need further clarification on this issue, please contact Jennifer Wood, Chief Legal Counsel, (401) 222-8486 or Jackie Ascrizzi, School Health Specialist, (401) 222-8953. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

PM(JLW/JA):mah